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HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Fifty-second session

REPORT OF THE TWENTIETH MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE (12 - 14 March 2001)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The meeting was opened by the Chairman of the Executive Committee, His Excellency, Ambassador Ali Khorram (Islamic Republic of Iran), who recalled that requests to participate as observers in meetings of the Standing Committee in 2001 had been received from the governments of Central African Republic, Croatia, Cyprus, Guinea, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, Slovenia, Swaziland, Zambia, and from the Organization of American States. At the proposal of the Chairman, these requests had already been conveyed to members of the Executive Committee, in line with the Committee's decision on observer participation taken in 1999 (A/AC.96/928). The Chairman welcomed observer delegations and non-governmental organization (NGO) delegations attending the Standing Committee as observers, notably those from Africa, CASWANAME and Asia and the Pacific regions.

2. The chairing of agenda item 4 on Protection/Programme policy was shared with His Excellency, Ambassador Johan Molander (Sweden), Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee.

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA OF THE NINETEENTH MEETING AND WORK PROGRAMME OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE IN 2001

3. The agenda for the meeting (EC/51/SC/CRP.1) was adopted. The Standing Committee's work programme, as discussed at the Planning Meeting held on 13 December 2000, was also adopted without revision (EC/51/SC/CRP.2).

III. DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER'S STATEMENT

4. In a brief opening statement, the Deputy High Commissioner referred to the three-pronged internal review launched by the new High Commissioner, relating respectively to UNHCR's mandated activities, its operations and

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funding issues. He then shared his reflections on the basic principles that needed to be observed in order to help UNHCR to be a defining leader for refugees.

IV. PROGRAMME AND FUNDING

A. Overall programme and funding in 2000 and projections for 2001

5. The Director of the Division of Communication and Information presented the overall programme and funding review for 2000 and projections for 2001, as contained in conference room paper EC/51/SC/CRP.9. He observed that 2000 had been the first year of application of the unified budget. On the positive side, the change had allowed UNHCR to resource field operations more equitably and earlier than in the past, providing a better view of the whole of country operations than was possible with General and Special Programmes. Another encouraging observation pertained to earmarking: under the new budget structure the portion of unearmarked or broadly earmarked funds had been well over 50%. On the negative side, however, serious difficulties had been encountered due to the uncertainty of funding from one quarter to the next. This had undermined efforts at overall strategic planning, marginalized some key operational activities and had been detrimental to UNHCR's credibility with its operational partners. It had called for a firmer approach to defining operational priorities, an area in which the organization had been found wanting.

6. Concerning the outlook for 2001, the Director recalled that requirements now reached $954.7. Even taking account of generous contributions announced at pledging events late in 2000, the Office was likely to face a shortfall of similar proportions to that experienced last year. This was a serious situation. In this context, he referred to the work initiated by the High Commissioner under Action 3, designed to rethink UNHCR's basic funding mechanism and to reassess management approaches in order to avoid what was fast becoming a chronic shortfall of funding.

7. Delegations taking the floor under this agenda item unanimously welcomed the initiative currently being taken by the High Commissioner to review the activities, structure and funding mechanisms of the Office, as described in his letter of 4 April 2001 to the Chairman. They also looked forward to being informed of the outcome of this important review process and providing their support. Several delegations drew attention to the need for creative ways of addressing the funding challenge, including pursuing efforts to broaden the donor base. They observed that funding the budget, once approved, was a responsibility shared by all Executive Committee members. It was also important, in this context, to recognize the important contribution of host countries. One delegation also suggested that the value-added of working with the unified budget should be assessed as part of the examination of the results of the review under way.

8. Several delegations expressed their concern over the budget cuts that had been announced and cautioned against linear cuts. They recommended that adjustments of activities to address budget shortfalls should be based on priorities set across regions and sectors with a focus on core needs. One delegation drew attention to the priority that must be given to security needs.

9. One observer delegation emphasized the importance of partnership between international agencies, welcoming the priority being given to developing a strategic dialogue which would favour greater predictability of funding and help ensure a common vision and effective distribution of labour among key players.

10. Several delegations commended UNHCR for having organized strategic planning meetings on a pilot basis in Thailand and Zambia. They recommended that such initiatives should be renewed and should involve NGOs as well as refugees in planning for UNHCR's operations.

11. Responding to these observations, the Director of Communication and Information thanked delegations for their support and for the announcements of contributions that had been made. He confirmed that arrangements would be made to brief the Committee on the outcome of the reviews underway, including the various specific issues that had been raised by delegations.

12. Concluding this item, the Chairman took note of the proposed amendments to the draft decision appended to the conference room paper. The revised decision (Annex I A.) was approved.

B. Africa

13. The Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa based his opening statement on the summary made available to delegations. He briefly described both positive and negative trends at regional level, as well as future directions. He drew attention to the effects of funding shortages and stressed the difficulties encountered when cuts had to be made mid-way through the programme cycle. Major problems included an inability to maintain longer-term commitments, decreased levels of care and maintenance services, hampering quick response mechanisms, and resulting in loss of credibility with implementing partners.

14. The many delegations who spoke included a large number from Africa, describing situations facing their countries as hosts to large numbers of refugees and/or returnees. Several delegations expressed appreciation for the High Commissioner's recent visit to West Africa which had served to focus world attention on the situation there. UNHCR's emergency response was also commended. Several delegations expressed their support for the safe corridors inside Guinea, but voiced concern with regard to the passage through rebel-held areas into Sierra Leone. Concern was also expressed as to who would assure the safety of the corridors as well as the extent of Sierra Leone's absorption capacity for returnees.

15. Several delegations expressed hope for prospects of peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), but noted the complexity of humanitarian activities in the region. One delegation recommended the appointment of a high-level humanitarian coordinator to deal with the complexities of Central Africa. An increase in assistance for returnees from Rwanda to the DRC was also called for. Another delegation supported the phasing out of reintegration activities in Rwanda. Two other delegations drew attention to the situation in and around Burundi, where acute security risks persisted.

16. Several delegations acknowledged the importance of responsibility-sharing, noting that the burden of refugees was increasing as the level of UNHCR's assistance decreased. On this subject, several delegations were of the opinion that no further cuts should be made to programmes in Africa. A call was also made for increased efforts for refugee women and children. One delegation made a particular plea for increased protection staff in Africa. Two delegations asked for an update on the implementation of the Conakry Comprehensive Implementation Plan, drawn up jointly by UNHCR and OAU.

17. Other recurrent themes included the devastation caused by HIV/AIDS. Over two-thirds of those affected world-wide were in Africa. There was an urgent need for an interagency, holistic approach to the pandemic. Many delegations expressed solidarity for UNHCR and other humanitarian staff facing security risks in the field, and agreed that staff security was a pre-requisite for any form of humanitarian assistance. One delegation requested an evaluation of the camp security model applied in the United Republic of Tanzania since there were requests for it to be duplicated elsewhere. On the subject of food aid, there was also a plea for improved funding of WFP programmes as the food basket for refugees did not always reach minimum standards.

18. Responding, the Director of the Bureau for Africa expressed appreciation for the support expressed, notably with respect to UNHCR's recent emergency response in various parts of West Africa. The issue of assessing the impact of the decentralized management structure would be discussed at a subsequent meeting. On the subject of interagency cooperation, the Regional Director for West Africa informed the Committee of the forthcoming signature of a Memorandum of Understanding with ECOWAS, which was a welcome development. On the other hand, attempts to involve other agencies such as UNDP, the World Bank and IGAD in reintegration activities design to anchor the returnees in their new communities, were not always successful, but efforts would continue. The Regional Director for Southern Africa also drew attention to the importance of education as a key factor in preparing children and adolescents to become useful members of their future society. Budget restrictions were particularly damaging when they detracted from achieving this goal.

C. CASWANAME

19. The Director of the Regional Bureau for Central Asia, South-West Asia, North Africa and the Middle East (CASWANAME) provided a detailed overview of the region, in which he emphasized the complexity of the refugee problems in the region and the difficulties in finding solutions to the long-standing refugee situations. He described the challenges of advocating for political solutions and conflict prevention as prerequisites for durable solutions, and defined the key operational strategies for UNHCR's action in this region in 2001 and 2002.

20. In the ensuing debate, a number of questions were raised regarding specific refugee situations and means employed to address them. Particular reference was made to the economic, environmental and social complexities of hosting large numbers of refugees for long periods of time. One delegation called for a comprehensive, integrated solution, based on burden-sharing,

citing the action by the international community in the Kosovo crisis as an example of what could be done. Other delegations supported this appeal. Questions were also raised regarding the increasingly alarming situation in Afghanistan and the fresh movements of people it was prompting into neighbouring Pakistan and Islamic Republic of Iran, which already hosted large refugee populations. It was agreed that political solutions were a prerequisite to long-term solutions, voluntary repatriation being the preferred option. Some delegations suggested that the provision of assistance within Afghanistan was likely to decrease the cross-border population movement, and that a concerted inter-agency approach was essential, based on the mandates of the respective agencies.

21. Several delegations demonstrated their interest in women's and children's issues, expressing their concern that they had been affected through the budget cuts. Another issue of interest to some delegations was that of UNHCR's emergency response capacity, and how adequate it had been in responding to the needs of new Afghan refugees. One delegation also drew attention to the devastating effects of sanctions on humanitarian needs of the population of his country. The issue of limited resources was also mentioned by other delegations, as well as the need for capacity-building at governmental level. One observer delegation representing the NGOs drew attention to the lack of an adequate legal framework within the region, and the important role of civil society in seeking to fill this void. Other delegations stressed the importance of national capacity-building as a means to promote refugee law and accession to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. In the course of the debate, one delegation insisted that UNHCR should not be involved in conflict-resolution or activities of a political nature since these were not within its mandate.

22. Responding to specific questions raised during the discussion, the Director of the Regional Bureau clarified the respective responsibilities of UNHCR and UNWRA with respect to Palestinian refugees, particularly in view of the pleas for support and assistance made by several delegation. He explained that UNPWA was the United Nations agency responsible for Palestinians within its area of operations: Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, West Bank and Gaza. UNHCR's responsibility was limited to Palestinians elsewhere. Cooperation between the two agencies over the years had been and remained close. The importance of this cooperation was also incorporated in the Cooperation Agreement signed by UNHCR with the League of Arab States in 2000, which was welcomed by delegations. In answer to a question concerning the situation of some 10,000 persons at the Afghan-Tajik border, the Director indicated that after consultations with the High Commissioner, it had been decided that these were not persons of concern to UNHCR. Assistance would only be resumed pending compliance with specific conditions, namely the separation of combatants from civilians, the relocation of campsites and the provision of free access to the area.

23. In answer to enquiries relating *inter alia* to programmes for women and children and to staffing, the Deputy Director of the Regional Bureau noted that some operations in the region were constrained by inadequate access to the populations concerned, and that there were insufficient numbers of Arabic or Russian-speaking female staff.

24. Following a lengthy exchange on the question of Western Sahara, the Chairman highlighted the importance of this issue and emphasized the need fo roots of this problem to be further discussed in the relevant and appropriat forums.

D. Asia and the Pacific

25. By way of complement to the written overview of UNHCR's operation in the Asia-Pacific region, the Bureau Director provided an update of the most recent developments. They included UNHCR's participation in a time-limited, *ad hoc* repatriation of close to 600 refugees from West to East Timor, as wel as preparation for the first Bhutan-Nepal joint verification of persons eligible for repatriation. He also described preparations for forthcoming Asia-Pacific Consultation (APC) meetings in the region.

26. Many delegations commended UNHCR for its work in the region, expressin support for its policy in Timor. One delegation suggested that UNHCR should assess the lessons learned in Cambodia, East Timor, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam with respect to reintegration and rehabilitation with a view to applying them in other parts of the region. Other specific issues raised by the delegations included North Koreans in China, the situation of Tibetans entering Nepal and India, the need to asses the situation of Karen, Karenni and Shan refugees in Thailand, as well as support for efforts to assist the remaining refugees from Myanmar in Bangladesh. One delegation also encouraged UNHCR to pursue efforts to help bring about the repatriation of over 100,000 refugees from Myanmar currently in Thailand. Another advised continued assistance to IDPs in Sri Lanka. UNHCR was also commended for its work as "honest broker" in the Bhutan-Nepal returnee verification process.

27. An observer delegation representing the NGOs expressed the hope that the Global Consultations on International Protection would encourage States in the region to accede to the 1951 Convention. Several delegations cited the APC as an important initiative, promoting dialogue and cooperation in th region and pledged their continued support of the process. In this context, it was suggested that that the APC might provide an appropriate forum for th Global Consultations.

28. Several delegations expressed interest in receiving more information o UNHCR's activities in the region on behalf of refugee women and children, noting that there was no Regional Adviser on Refugee Women and General Equality in the Asia and Pacific region. Several delegations expressed appreciation for efforts to enhance emergency management and response capacities in the region, reiterating their support for E-Centre activities based in Japan.

29. In his concluding statement, the Director of the Bureau for Asia and the Pacific confirmed that UNHCR would begin phasing down operations in East Timor in June 2001, and gave details of arrangements for concluding the shelter programme. It was hoped that development agencies would assume responsibility for subsequent shelter needs, thus avoiding the relief-to-development gap. He noted the concern expressed during the discussion as to potential refugee flows in other parts of Indonesia, confirming that the situation was being closely monitoring.

V. PROTECTION/PROGRAMME POLICY

A. Follow-up to Annual Theme of fifty-first session

30. The Chairman recalled that the annual theme of the Executive Committee's fifty-first session, had been *UNHCR@50: from response to solutions,* in view of UNHCR's anniversary year. He drew attention to the document that had provided the framework for the Committee's debate (A/AC.96.938) and to the Chairman's summary of the debate (A/AC.96/944, Annex 3). No statements were made on follow-up to this theme.

B. Emergency preparedness and response

31. Introducing this sub-item, the Head of Emergency and Security Service drew attention to measures taken in implementing the Plan of Action drawn up in 2000 with respect to preparedness, response, structural issues and post-emergency management, as well as other initiatives notably in strengthening or forging new partnerships, as described in the conference room paper EC/51/SC/CRP.4.

32. In their interventions, many delegations commended UNHCR for the progress achieved since the elaboration of the Plan of Action, as demonstrated in the recent emergencies in West Africa. There was a consensus that emergency response and security should be given priority, and should not be affected by any new restrictions on resources. One delegation supported a continued increase of core emergency staff. Several delegations expressed an interest in receiving an updated Plan of Action, which would include budgetary components.

33. Several delegations expressed some concern regarding UNHCR's plans to develop links with the military, cautioning that the criteria for such links needed to be clearly defined. They also emphasized that it was important to avoid duplication with other parts of the United Nations system, notably the Military and Civil Defence Unit of OCHA. One delegation observed that stand-by resources and military support in emergencies should always be under civilian control, respecting humanitarian principles.

34. Several delegations were pleased to note the efforts aimed at enhanced and joint training. This was particularly important in preparing the roster of staff. Efforts to involve other agencies in the training were also welcomed. One delegation requested that this training should take place in the field, close to countries in crisis. On contingency planning, one delegation wished to be informed of the criteria used for situational analysis. Another delegation welcomed UNHCR's involvement in the establishment of an enhanced early-warning capacity in New York. Several delegations expressed their interest in the real-time evaluation conducted during the Eritrea/Sudan emergency in June 2000, and recommended that this experiment should be renewed. It was also important to integrate lessons learned that emerged from the various evaluations into the training programmes.

35. On the subject of the management and staffing of emergencies, several delegations noted the recent efforts to clarify reporting lines and decision-

making processes. They nevertheless expressed concern at the continued difficulty in securing the release of qualified, senior staff. One delegation also questioned what measures could help ensure the effectiveness of the proposed additional stand-by arrangements. Other delegations also cautioned against the use of emergency teams to fill staffing gaps.

36. In conclusion of the discussion, the Head of the Emergency and Security Service expressed her appreciation for the numerous statements of support, and undertook to provide the Committee with an updated Plan of Action, as requested. She confirmed that every effort was being made to foster interagency cooperation at every level, notably with OCHA. On the issue of cooperation with the military, UNHCR's aim was to reinforce this collaboration through a proposed rotating scheme of short-term secondments of military personnel to facilitate exchange, training and mutual understanding between military institutions and UNHCR. This proposal was in line with the recommendation of the 2000 Plan of Action to re-establish a unit for liaison with military, which had met with a favourable response on the part of some governments. She acknowledged that the availability of senior staff as part of emergency teams remained a challenge, but a number of creative ideas were being tested including enhancing the capacity of selected middle-level staff to assume greater responsibilities. The transition phase between the emergency team and replacement staff was also difficult, but experience had shown that the first two months of an emergency were vital for the establishment of mechanisms which could make this transition smoother.

C. Reintegration: a progress report

37. The Director a.i.of the Division of Operational Support referred in his introduction to the range of on-going and new initiatives with respect to reintegration, as described in the progress report submitted to the meeting (EC/51/SC/CRP.5). He emphasized the importance of partnerships in the reintegration process and raised the question as to how far UNHCR should be involved.

38. Several delegations expressed their appreciation for the leadership shown by UNHCR in its efforts to put the reintegration issue on the international agenda. Special mention was made of the role of the former High Commissioner and of the Deputy High Commissioner through the Brookings Process. It was hoped that their efforts to achieve concrete results would be sustained. Some delegations recognized, however, that progress remained limited and that institutional and funding gaps continued to exist. One delegation acknowledged that these gaps existed not just among and between multilateral agencies, but also among the donors which needed to address their "capital gaps".

39. One delegation, referring to the overwhelming problems in areas receiving returnees appealed for assistance in the form of quick impact projects to ease their plight, and empower the refugees in their search for durable solutions. This view was echoed by several delegations who felt that reintegration was an essential aspect of UNHCR's work and that solutions-oriented approaches were as important as protection activities. Such approaches should therefore be pursued, and be accompanied by well-defined exit strategies. One delegation observed that by making an initial

investment to anchor returnees through self-reliance, the international community would be faced with less costs in the long run.

40. Many delegations highlighted the essential role of partnerships with development agencies and with bilateral donors, and welcomed UNHCR's current efforts in this direction, particularly in support of reconstructing African countries. They encouraged UNHCR to continue this work. One delegation, while recognizing the difficulties facing UNHCR when there are no other partners present, felt that partnerships should be forged with development actors at an earlier stage than had been the case so far.

41. Several delegations made reference to the specific country focus that had resulted from the meeting convened by UNHCR in November 2000. This implied a welcome shift from a theoretical approach, bringing new dynamism and commitment to the Brookings process. Several donors expressed their support and the hope that, based on sound analyses, new resources could be mobilized for Rwanda and the Republic of the Congo, the two countries that had been selected as pilots.

D. Reinforcing a community development approach

42. This sub-item was introduced by the Director a.i. of the Division of Operational Support, who emphasized that the community development approach as outlined in the conference room paper (EC/51/SC/CRP.6) had been advocated for a number of years but needed to become standard.

43. Many delegations expressed their support for this approach, recognizing the need to promote refugee empowerment while fully respecting their values and cultural backgrounds. Some delegations considered, however, that the draft conclusion annexed to the conference room paper should be stronger, and state more clearly the need to operationalize and integrate this approach in all UNHCR's programmes. One delegation proposed that it should be extended to the host communities. Other delegations expressed concern over possible budget implications, and advised that UNHCR should first pilot test the community development approach.

44. One observer delegation, speaking on behalf of the NGOs, welcomed and supported the policy approach and referred to close collaboration in this context between UNHCR and a number of NGOs. She gave examples of past efforts to bring community development and mobilization back on the agenda, and noted that greater emphasis was called for regarding the participation of children and adolescents in decision-making. The community development approach called for new methods of working with refugee communities, accepting that this was a long-term process that involves all actors in an ongoing dialogue.

45. Several delegations drew attention to the experience of NGOs in this field recommending that their best practice should be used as models. The importance of training with all partners was also acknowledged in order to adopt and implement a common approach. Several delegations drew attention to the need for the community development approach to be promoted in all sectors, in view of its cross-cutting nature, and in all phases of an operation.

46. The Director a.i. of the Division of Operational Support, assisted by the Head of Health and Community Development Section, took note of the various observations and suggestions that had been put forward. It was acknowledged that the main challenge in implementing the policy was to achieve a change in attitudes.

47. The draft conclusion, as amended, was adopted by the Committee. It appears in Annex I B.

E. Refugees and HIV/Aids

48. Presenting the conference room paper on this sub-item (EC/51/SC/CRP.7), the Director a.i. of the Division of Operational Support drew attention to the specific threats to refugees of this dreadful disease, described as the scourge of the century. He called attention to the urgent need for coordinated efforts and common strategies. This call was echoed in the introductory statement by the UNAIDS Director of Country Planning and Programme Development, who confirmed the overwhelming proportions of the disease. While there were some signs of growing awareness and commitment at internaional level, much still needed to be done. This was particularly important in meeting needs of refugees. It required reinforcing various interagency mechanisms and taking measures to ensure that refugee needs were included in national programmes. He also welcomed the forthcoming Special Session of the General Assembly which should serve to galvanize further international support.

49. Many delegations underlined the importance of HIV/AIDS as a global issue for which more concerted and coordinated action was needed. They called on UNHCR to place HIV/AIDS higher on its agenda and take the lead on this issue with respect to refugees. Many also referred to the particular risks faced by women, adolescent girls, orphans and children, and stressed the need for a comprehensive multi-faceted response, including protection, education, health, community participation and the empowerment of women and youth. There needed to be a focus on awareness campaigns that would include the local population. Partnerships needed to be built with refugees and their leaders. Several delegations also drew attention to the important role played by refugee women, and well as the key role of education. One delegation noted that abstinence and responsible behaviour must be included as essential elements of prevention. The NGO observer also drew attention to the stigma attached to the disease and its adverse effects notably on resettlement opportunities.

50. Some delegations encouraged UNHCR to collect and provide more data on the problem of HIV/AIDS in refugee situations. They also welcomed the creation of an internal task force. One delegation suggested that UNHCR should also convene a meeting with donors and host governments to stimulate further support. One delegation recommended that a working document on HIV/AIDS and refugees could usefully be submitted to the forthcoming General Assembly Special Session. The representative of the OAU referred to the high-level meeting that was to take place in April 2001 in Nigeria at which this would be a major issue.

51. A number of delegates noted that the cost of care was beyond the reach of many countries, as well as that of the humanitarian community. One

delegations suggested that a special consolidated appeal might be a way to raise additional funds to support prevention and care.

52. In their concluding remarks, both the Director a.i. of the Division of Operational Support and the Head of Health and Community Development Section expressed appreciation for the many acknowledgements of the importance and urgency of this issue. They noted emphasis on prevention rather than treatment, and the links with community development and programmes for women and children. They also undertook to following-up on specific suggestions that had been made and to report back to the Committee on progress in due course.

F. Safety and security issues

53. Introducing the conference room paper on this sub-item (EC/51/SC/CRP.8), the Head of the Emergency and Security Service called attention to action recently undertaken to reinforce and strengthen staff and refugee security. This action focused on three key areas: mainstreaming responsibilities and capacities for security within the Office; supporting pro-active security management; and establishing and maintaining standards of security in UNHCR's operations. She drew attention to some complementary statistical information made available to the Standing Committee on security incidents in the year 2000, which indicated a sharp increase (over 50%) in comparison with the previous year.

54. Many delegations expressed support for the priority areas as described in the paper and emphasized the importance of management aspects of this important issue, which must remain high on the Standing Committee's agenda. One delegation stressed the importance of clear lines of decision-making in this area. Another called for more explicit explanations as to what was being done to change the organizational culture in order to increase accountability at all levels. Regarding personal responsibility, some delegations also expressed interest in the plan to require all Heads of Office in hazardous duty stations to draft a security protocol with their staff.

55. The importance of inter-agency cooperation was also highlighted by some delegations, welcoming UNHCR's intentions to make more effective use of the United Nations inter-agency security management team, and encouraging UNHCR to make full use of the extended capacity of UNSECOORD. Interest was also expressed in the development at inter-agency level of minimum operational security standards. On the issue of funding, several delegations considered that costs of the enhanced resources for UNSECOORD should be covered through the UN Regular Budget. They acknowledged nevertheless that a field-based agency such as UNHCR would need additional funding for its increased needs and proposed to examine how best to provide the support required.

56. An observer delegation representing the NGOs recalled the interdependence of humanitarian agencies in the field with respect to staff security, calling for greater use to be made of the UNHCR-NGO framework agreement for operational partnership as a platform upon which to build further security collaboration. The NGOs were encouraged by the creation of a task force in the context of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee which was currently working on some recommendations.

57. On the issue of refugee security, several delegations renewed their support for the understanding reached between UNHCR and the United Nations Department of Peace-Keeping Operations (DPKO). Several delegations also referred to the proposed deployment of Humanitarian Security Officers (HSOs) for which UNHCR had sought the support of governments. This dialogue was still ongoing. Welcoming the link between staff security and refugee security, one delegation drew attention to the need to include the security of host populations in areas surrounding those where there were large numbers of refugees. Some delegations also referred to the discussions that had taken place at the Global Consultations relating to camp security. One delegation observed that a holistic approach was essential that included attention to camp design and layout.

58. In her response, the Head of Emergency and Security Service thanked delegations for the many expressions of support and for the specific suggestions and observations they had made. She acknowledged that the issue of HSOs was complex and needed further joint reflection. On the issue of funding, she appealed for governments to ensure that the current cost-sharing debate did not result in having to divert resources from UNHCR's essential work in order to meet such costs.

VI. COORDINATION

59. The Head of Secretariat and Inter-Organization Service presented a brief update on coordination issues within the UN systems, for which an information note had been made available (EC/50/SC/INF.1). Major developments had included the change in the ACC mechanism and follow-up to the Brahimi Report. Important meetings were scheduled for April 2001, notably the ACC in Nairobi, immediately followed by ECHA and preparations for ECOSOC's humanitarian segment.

60. In a statement to the Committee, the Deputy Director of OCHA and Assistant Emergency Relief Coordinator appealed for a concerted effort to strengthen the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP). This was all the more vital in view of the erosion of multilateral humanitarian action observed in past years. The CAPs were the result of painful efforts at coordination and prioritization in the field, and provided a mechanism to avoid glaring discrepancies in support for appeals, adding some perspective to real humanitarian needs. He called for a strengthening of the IASC and its reference groups which were doing much useful work in aligning policies and practices in a range of fields. On the subject of natural disaster response, he described the work achieved by the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) Teams which had been deployed in 80 situations since 1993 and most recently to complex emergencies. He further referred to the complex issue of the humanitarian-military interface in disaster relief, and to the work of the Military and Civil Defense Coordination Unit within OCHA, with its foreign military and civil defense assets. The system was based on the Oslo guidelines adopted in 1994. These guidelines were currently under review to assess their potential application to complex emergencies.

61. An observer delegation speaking on behalf of the NGOs referred to the Brahimi report and its follow-up. While acknowledging that the report was an important step in strengthening the peace-making, peace-keeping and

peace-building work of the United Nations, it was regrettable that it paid insufficient attention to the fact that many of the actors involved in the humanitarian response were not from the United Nations. Moreover the report did not adequately reflect the difference between the principles of peace operations and those governing the humanitarian response, i.e. the principle of impartiality as understood by humanitarian organizations. This was based on a stated obligation to deliver aid on the basis of need alone, in accordance with the precepts of the Red Cross/NGO Code of Conduct. He recommended that the follow-up to the Brahimi report should include specific measures to address the role of women in peacekeeping operations and expressed concern, on behalf of the NGO community, that the implementation of the Brahimi report could be used to increase the preponderance of political and military actors of humanitarian response and compromise the independence of the humanitarian agencies.

62. Several delegations welcomed the availability of a written update under this agenda item as an invaluable source of comprehensive information. Some requested that future updates might give more prominence to UNHCR's contributions to the various mechanisms and the issues it wished to advocate. One delegation suggested that this item might come earlier on the agenda to allow time for lengthier discussion.

VII. STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE UNHCR STAFF COUNCIL

63. In the course of the meeting, the Committee was provided with an update on the activities of UNHCR's Staff Council. The Chairperson referred to the reviews initiated by the High Commissioner and their implications in terms of staff reductions. Other issues of priority to the Staff Council included staff security and various aspects of the human resources management of the Office.

VIII. GOVERNANCE

64. The Director of the Division of Communication and Information recalled the various enhancements of the ExCom format that had been tested at its last session in October 2000, and put forward a series of similar proposals for the coming session, contained in document EC/50/SC/CRP.3.

65. Several delegations expressed their support for these proposals, notably the annual theme, which would this year be replaced by an overview of the High Commissioner's perspective on priorities for the work of the Office in this first year of his mandate.

66. Some delegations suggested that the panel sessions should focus on challenging issues linked to UNHCR's operations in the field. Support was also expressed for the funding meeting. One delegation observed that the adoption of the budget should be preceded by substantial discussions on funding. Several delegations looked forward to further proposals on strengthening the involvement of the NGOs, currently being explored by the Bureau and NGO representatives.

67. In the course of the meeting, the Chairman also reminded the Standing Committee of the various resolutions that had been under the item on UNHCR at the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. They were as follows:

A/RES/55/72 - *Enlargement of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United High Commissioner for Refugees* (Mexico);
A/RES/55/74 - *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner* ("omnibus");
A/RES/55/75 - *Ad hoc Committee of the General Assembly for the announcement of voluntary contributions to the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees;*
A/RES/55/76 - *Fiftieth anniversary of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and World Refugee Day;*
A/RES/55/77 - *Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa.*

IX. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

68. Before closing the meeting, the Committee led by the Chairman paid tribute to the outgoing Deputy High Commissioner, acknowledging his exceptional human qualities and thanking him for the impetus he had brought to UNHCR's work in several areas.

DECISION AND CONCLUSION
(as adopted at the 20th meeting of the Standing Committee,
12 - 14 March 2001)

A. DECISION ON OVERALL PROGRAMME AND FUNDING IN 2000 AND PROJECTIONS FOR 2001 (Item 3(I))

The Standing Committee,

Recalling the Executive Committee's decision at its fifty-first session on programme, administrative and financial matters (A/AC.96/932, para. 21);

(a) *Notes* that the UNHCR's overall needs for 2001 based on currently known requirements amounts to $ 898.5 million as approved by the Executive Committee (which includes the allocation of $ 19.1 million from the United Nations Regular Budget and $ 7 million for Junior Professional Officers), and an additional $ 56.2 million for four Supplementary Programmes;

(b) *Notes* that, in view of the low carryover from 2000 and projected levels of income in 2001, UNHCR has instructed its field offices to plan implementation of its programmes in the expectation that they will only receive up to 80 per cent of approved budgets;

(c) *Encourages* UNHCR to aim to address budget shortfalls by adjusting activities based on priorities set across regions and sectors with a focus on core needs;

(d) *Welcomes* the initiative taken by the High Commissioner to review the priorities and the funding mechanisms of the Office and looks forward to being informed by the High Commissioner of the outcomes of this review process;

(e) *Emphasizes* the importance of the international community providing adequate funding for UNHCR's programmes and *encourages* the Executive Committee to engage in a substantive and transparent discussion of the Budget prior to its adoption;

(f) *Stresses* that, with the introduction of the unified budget since the year 2000, early announcements and payments of contributions are essential to allow the continuation and timely implementation of the UNHCR's Programmes;

(g) *Urges* all Governments to consider identifying additional contributions for UNHCR's programmes in 2001.

B. CONCLUSION ON REINFORCING A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT APPROACH (Item 4(iv))

The Standing Committee,

(a) *Welcomes* the efforts made by UNHCR outlined in EC/51/SC/CRP.6 to reinforce a community development approach in addressing the search for durable solutions with due participation of refugees and people of concern to the Office;

(b) *Endorses* the objectives and essential elements of this approach with respect to its planning and implementation;

(c) *Requests* UNHCR to operationalize and mainstream a community approach in all of its activities, and to promote implementation among its partners, in cooperation with other relevant actors;

(d) *Recommends* UNHCR to promote, in the implementation of community-building activities, the involvement of host populations in the country of asylum, as well as the involvement of all population components in the country of origin, during the reintegration phase;

(e) *Requests* UNHCR to report to the Standing Committee on progress made in policy development and operationalization of a community development approach.